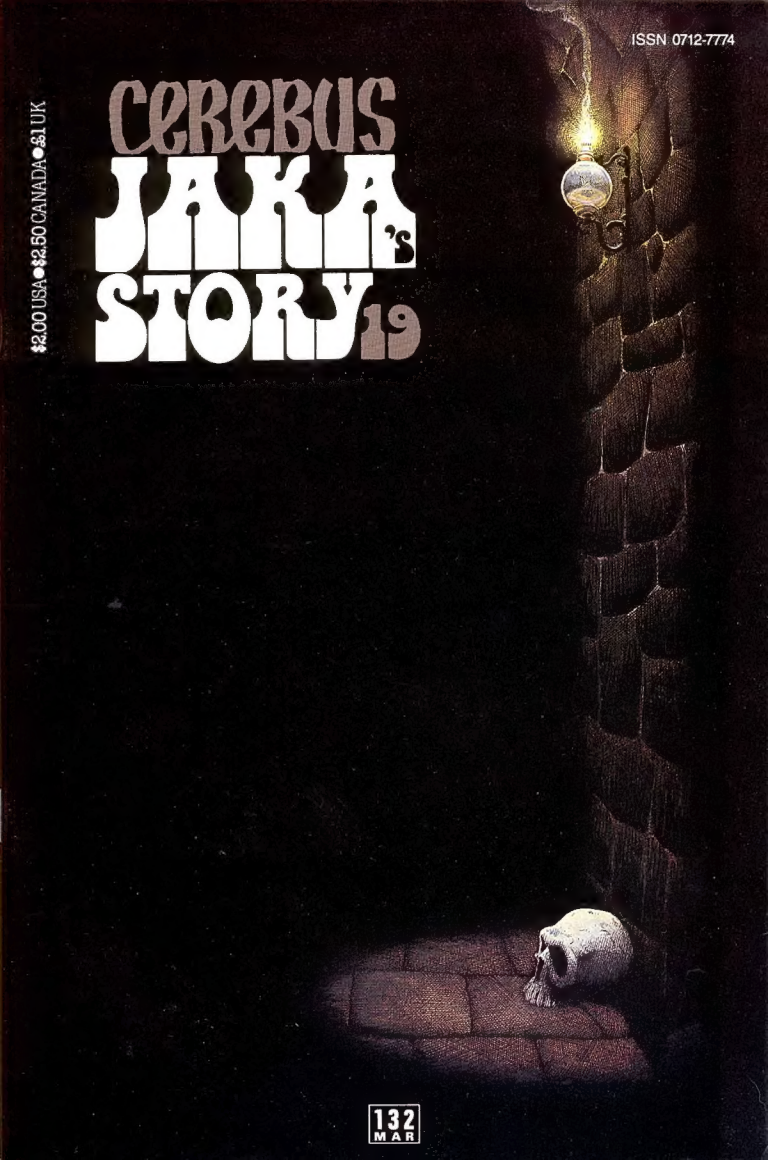
ISSN 0712-7774

CEREBUS

JAKA'S STORY 19

$2.00 USA • $2.50 CANADA • £1 UK



132
MAR

NOTE • FROM • THE PRESIDENT

It's like Gerhard said. If we keep at this long enough we might get the hang of it.

I got the lettering done for the last issue and the letters page and . . . this is the next day, to make a long story short. I left the Note from the President until Gerhard was pasting up 11, 12, 13 of 131 which is (this is 132, right? right. right.) last issue, which you read about two, maybe three weeks ago and which I'm still working on, just waiting for the pages where we shorten the angle at which we see the two cell doors (someone is typesetting this at Typestyle who doesn't even know Jaka's been *arrested* because their freebie copy of 130 won't be in for two weeks! Isn't time distortion wonderful?) and get a working drawing of the space in the cell door-window (what an awkward name for such a simple thing) in Jaka's cell door from Gerhard so I can put Jaka's face and/or hand in, so I decided to take one day and write out as much of the dialogue as I have done in my head for the rest of Mystery Achievement (131 to 136) and I got to the middle four pages of (this is 132 right? right. right.) 13_wait a minute I've got it right here next to the last six back cover quotes and the sketches of . . . I can't tell you that because she doesn't come in until 133. The first half of 134 except for the two page Young Jaka center-spread which I actually now have a mental picture of that I didn't have as late as 10:30 this morning which is good news for our stop-watch).

★★★★★★★★★★

The Jaka's Story telephone book (only in the comics field is something four hundred some-odd pages in length described as a telephone book and a story of sixty or seventy pages called a graphic novel. I digress) will be available in its first edition form by credit card/cheque or m.o. phone order *only*, early this fall; we'll let *you* know the minute *we* know.

The *Cerebus* volume is *no longer available from us*. Please contact your local shop or comics distributor and when you do *ASK NICELY!*

The Comicshop Boxes mentioned some time ago are now $355 dollars Canadian (which is about $320 U.S. or, once the money markets get a good laugh out of our projected Federal Deficit for 1990, about $310 U.S. I'd reckon) and contain five copies each of *High Society, Church & State* volume one and *Church & State* volume two. We pay the shipping.

We repeat! The *Cerebus* volume is now ONLY available in the Direct Sales outlet near you. NOT at Waldenbooks, NOT from us, NOT in specially-marked boxes. *ONLY* in comic book stores. Like *FOREVER!*

This is also the last time you can order *High Society* from us. After February 1991 only in comic book stores.

Sorry I got a bit loud there.

★★★★★★★★★★

It's now a week later and Gerhard has the two-page Young Jaka center-spread pencilled and page sixteen needs some work, but aside from that 131 is a go and I'm going to answer all the mail that's come in: but before I do that I'd like to give a plug to Ivan Brunetti's *Misery Loves Comedy*, the first publication of Paisano Publishing, 1519 East 54th Street, Third Floor, Chicago Illinois 60615. It arrived with a bunch of Single Page submissions and I thought "Oh, Lord. He can't draw". By the middle of the book I was laughing so hard it was starting to irritate Gerhard (because he, was like, working, eh?). By the time *I* was done, I had picked up the cover letter thinking "Wow. A real letter from *the* Ivan Brunetti" and Ger was busting a gut reading the book in *his* studio. Six dollars U.S. Throw in a buck for postage and his Uncle Vito won't have to do anything you'll regret. This is only available at two bookstores on the University of Chicago campus but it has sold quintillions of copies there. Be the first kid on your block.

Cerebus

NO. 132 MARCH 1990

DAVE SIM
President

GERHARD
Vice-President

MONIQUE KAPTEIN
Administrative Assistant

JAKA'S STORY
a novel

•

PROLOGUE
(Cerebus 114)

•

POGROM'S PROGRESS
(Cerebus 115 to Cerebus 119)

•

THE POET
(Cerebus 120 to Cerebus 130)

•

MYSTERY ACHIEVEMENT
(Cerebus 131 to Cerebus 136)

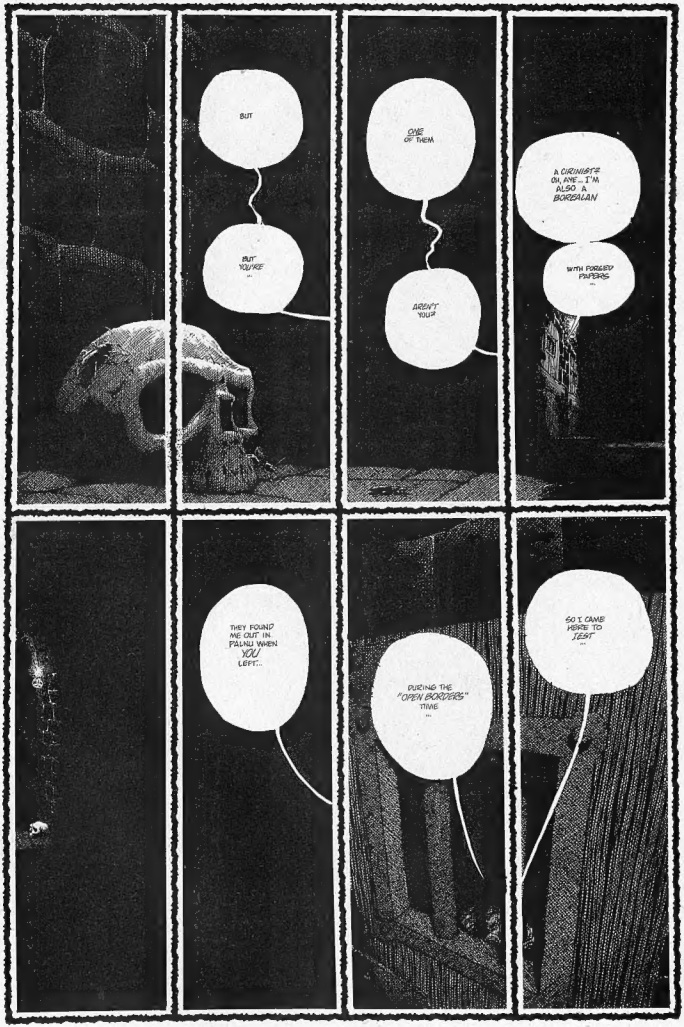
•

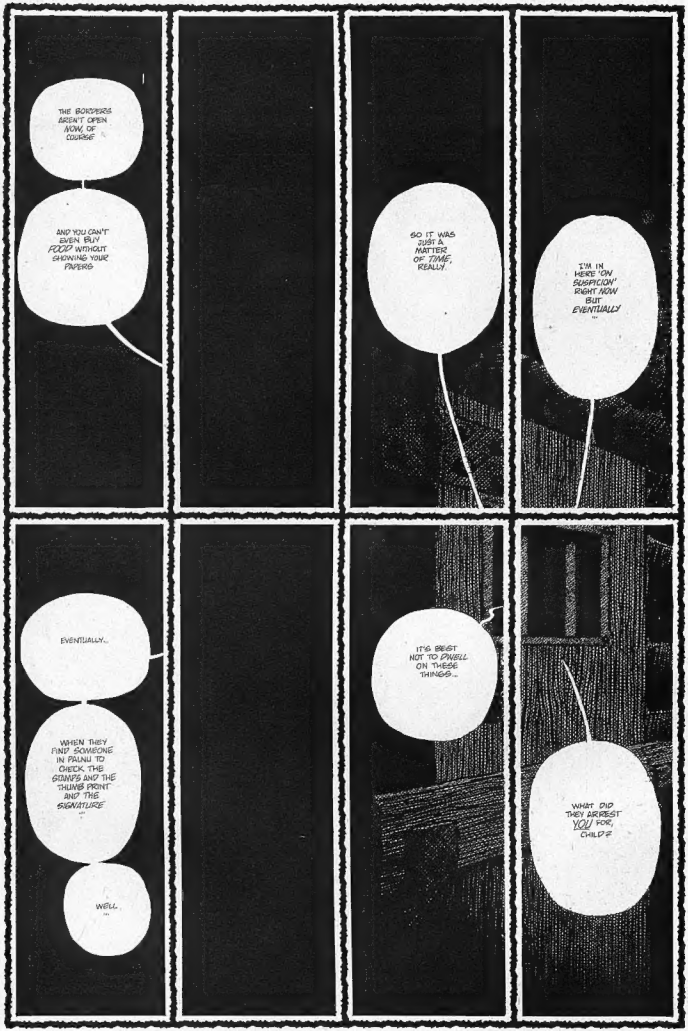
CEREBUS IS PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY AARDVARK-VANAHEIM INC. P.O. BOX 1674 STN. C KITCHENER ONTARIO CANADA N2G 4R2

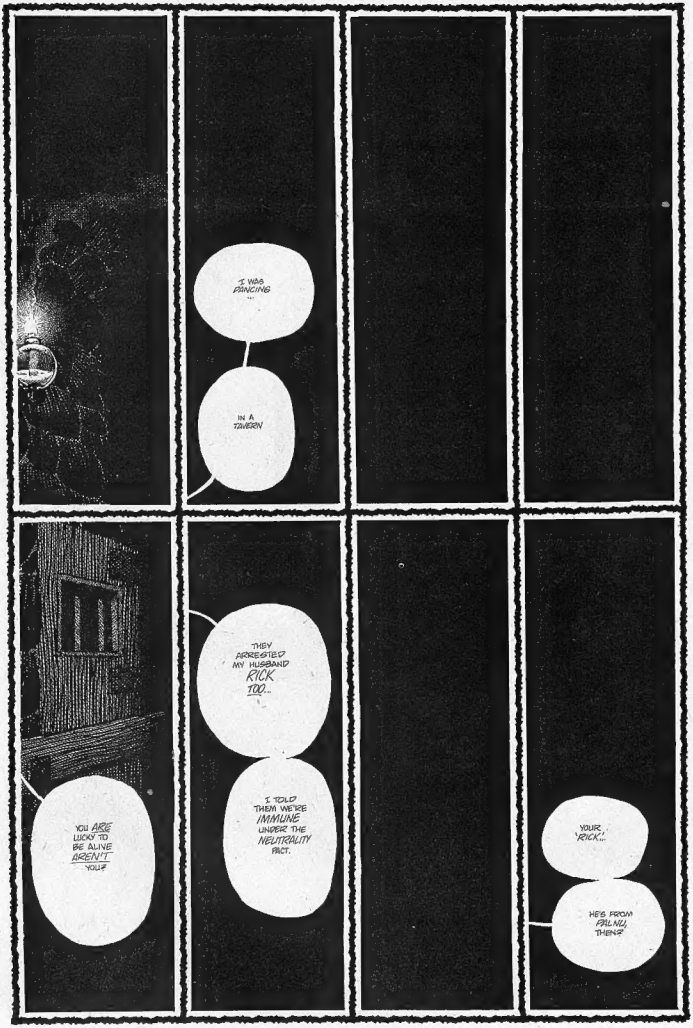
ALL CONTENTS © 1989 DAVE SIM.

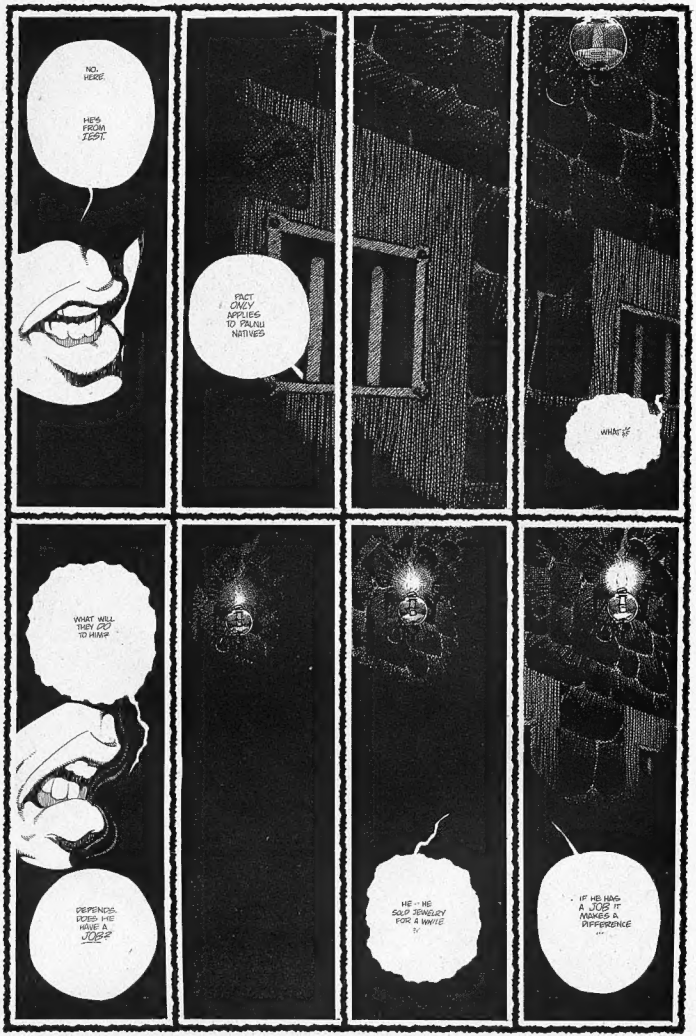
PRINTED IN CANADA BY **PRENEY PRINT & LITHO INC.**, WINDSOR, ONTARIO.

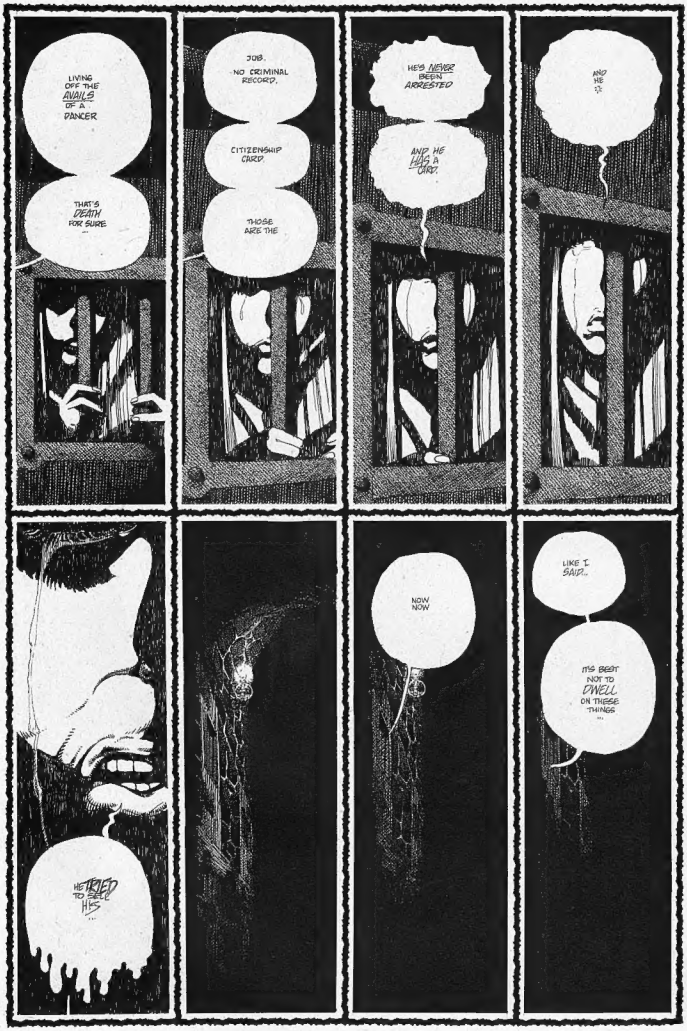
PRINTED IN CANADA


BUT
BUT YOU'RE ...
ONE OF THEM
AREN'T YOU?
A CRIMINAL? OH, AYE... I'M ALSO A BORSALAN
WITH FORGED PAPERS ...
THEY FOUND ME OUT IN PALAU WHEN YOU LEFT...
DURING THE "OPEN BORDERS" TIME ...
SO I CAME HERE TO JEET ...

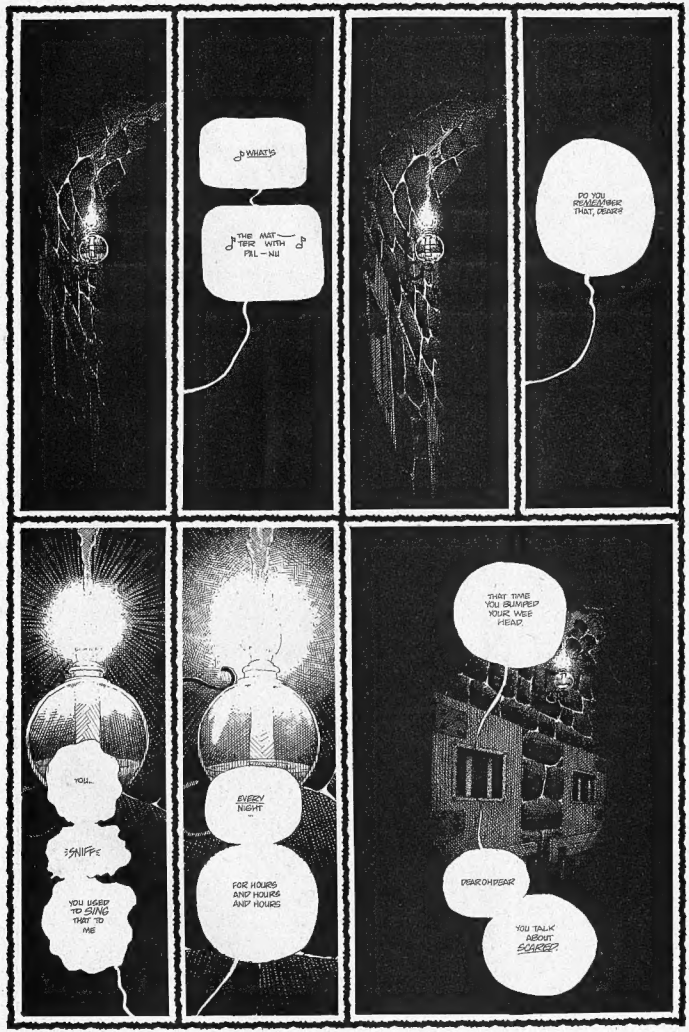

THE BORDERS AREN'T OPEN NOW, OF COURSE
AND YOU CAN'T EVEN BUY FOOD WITHOUT SHOWING YOUR PAPERS
SO IT WAS JUST A MATTER OF TIME, REALLY.
I'M IN HERE 'ON SUSPICION' RIGHT NOW, BUT EVENTUALLY ...
EVENTUALLY...
WHEN THEY FIND SOMEONE IN PALAU TO CHECK THE STAMPS AND THE THUMB PRINT AND THE SIGNATURE ...
WELL ...
IT'S BEST NOT TO DWELL ON THESE THINGS...
WHAT DID THEY ARREST YOU FOR, CHILD?

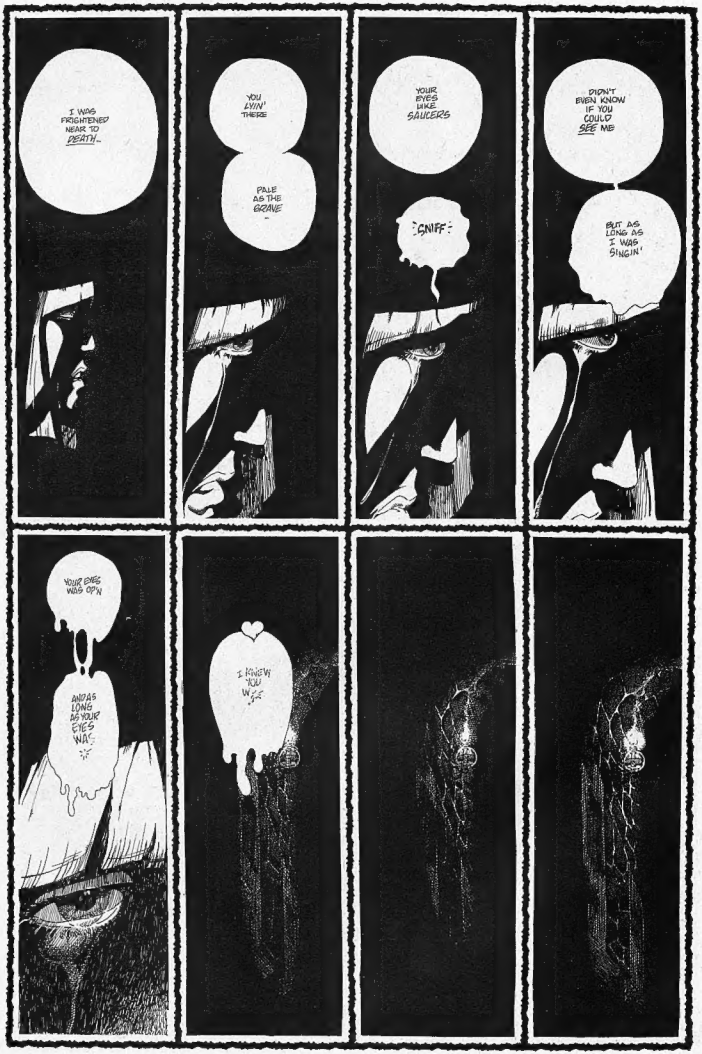

I WAS DANCING...
IN A TAVERN
YOUR "RICK"...
HE'S FROM FALNU, THEN?
THEY ARRESTED MY HUSBAND RICK TOO...
I TOLD THEM WE'RE IMMUNE UNDER THE NEUTRALITY PACT.
YOU ARE LUCKY TO BE ALIVE AREN'T YOU?


NO... HERE
HE'S FROM JEST.
FACT ONLY APPLIES TO PALAU NATIVES
WHAT IF
WHAT WILL THEY DO TO HIM?
DEPENDS. DOES HE HAVE A JOB?
HE -- HE SOLD JEWELRY FOR A WHITE
IF HE HAS A JOB IT MAKES A DIFFERENCE ...

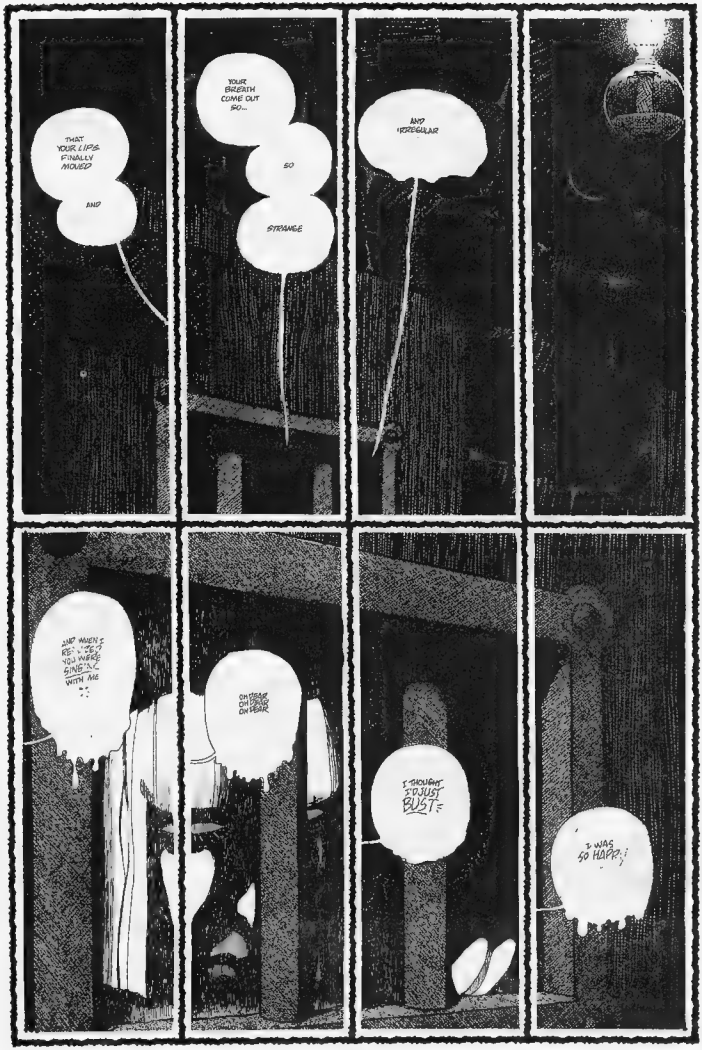

LIVING OFF THE AVAILS OF A DANCER
THAT'S DEATH FOR SURE
JOB.
NO CRIMINAL RECORD.
CITIZENSHIP CARD.
THOSE ARE THE
HE'S NEVER BEEN ARRESTED
AND HE HAS A CAR.
AND HE
HE TRIED TO SEE HIS
NOW NOW
LIKE I SAID...
ITS BEST NOT TO DWELL ON THESE THINGS

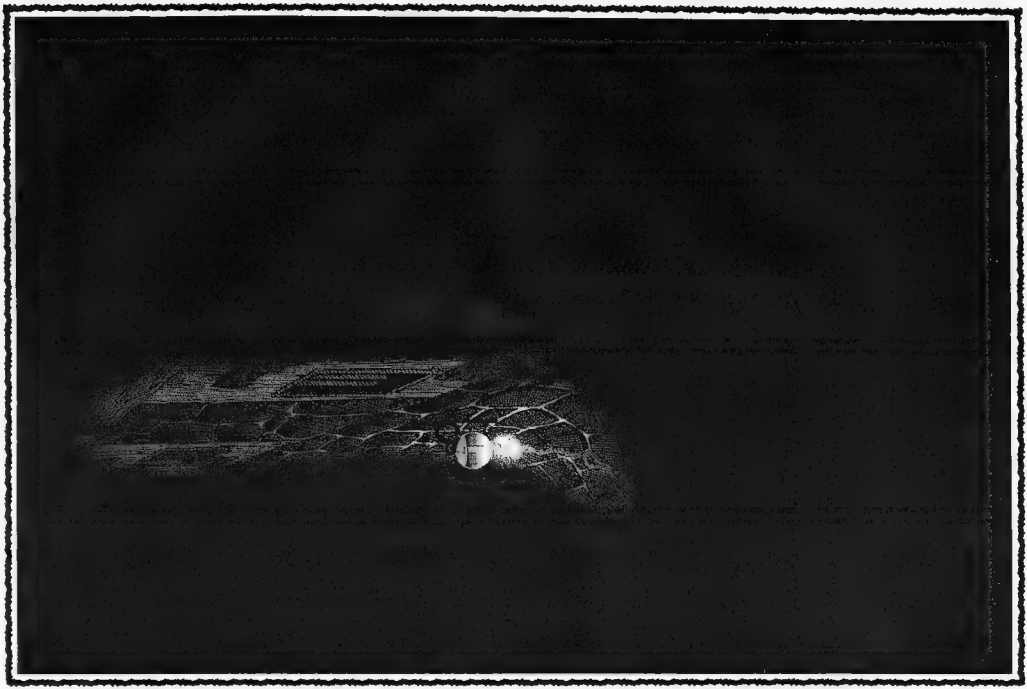
MUNH
RICK'S DEAD. ISN'T HE?!
SH SH SH
SHHHHHH...
MUNH
WE—ARE OLD PAL-NU-TOWN
MUNH
I ARE—LONG TO PAL—NU
MUNH


♪ WHAT'S
THE MATTER WITH FIL – NU ♪
DO YOU REMEMBER THAT, DEAR?
THAT TIME YOU BUMPED YOUR WEE HEAD.
DEAR OH DEAR
YOU TALK ABOUT SCARED?
EVERY NIGHT ...
FOR HOURS AND HOURS AND HOURS
YOU...
:SNIFF:
YOU USED TO SING THAT TO ME

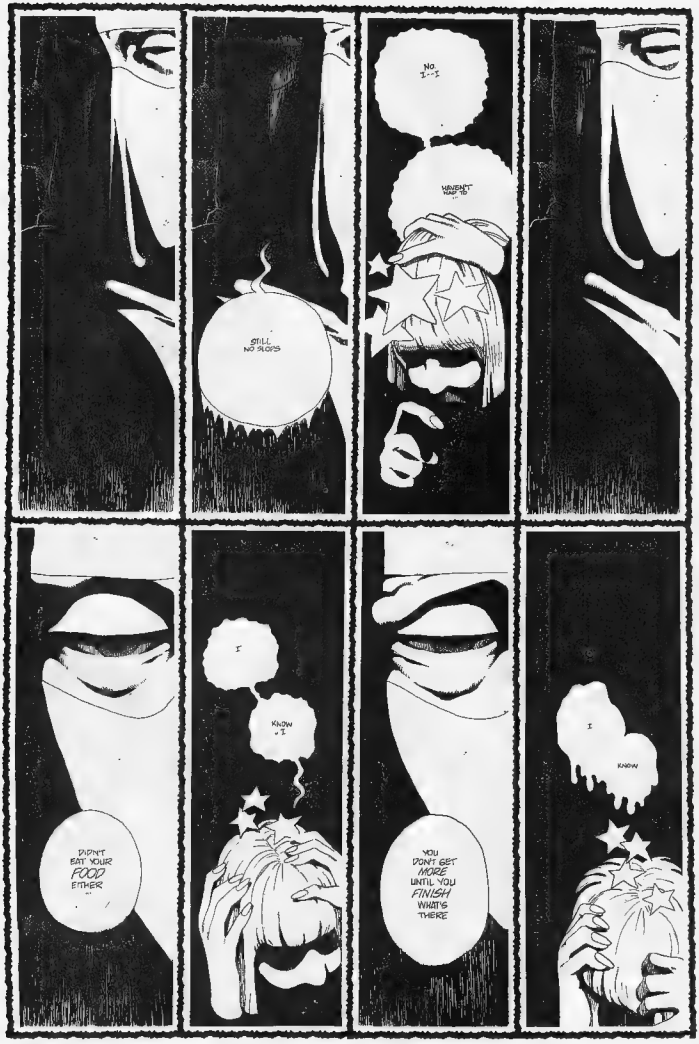

I WAS FRIGHTENED NEAR TO DEATH...
YOU LYIN' THERE
PALE AS THE GRAVE -
YOUR EYES LIKE SAUCERS
:SNIFF:
DIDN'T EVEN KNOW IF YOU COULD SEE ME
BUT AS LONG AS I WAS SINGIN'
YOUR EYES WAS OPN
AND AS LONG AS YOUR EYES WAS
I KNEW YOU W

AND THEN
THAT ONE NIGHT


THAT YOUR LIPS FINALLY MOVED
AND
YOUR BREATH COME OUT SO...
SO
STRANGE
AND IRREGULAR
AND WHEN I RE-SEE YOU WERE SINGING WITH ME
OH DEAR OH DEAR OH DEAR
I THOUGHT I'D JUST BUST
I WAS SO HAPP-



OH!
I TOLD YOU YESTERDAY.
SLEEP ON THE BED!
UNDERSTAND?
YES! YES! I'M SORRY!


STILL NO SLOPS
NO. I--I
WHENEVER MAMA'S
I KNOW
I KNOW
DIDN'T EAT YOUR FOOD EITHER
YOU DON'T GET MORE UNTIL YOU FINISH WHAT'S THERE

SUIT YOURSELF
CHING JINGLE TING
HOW MUCH?
QUARTER OF A BUCKET
LET'S SEE
TOOM
SCUF SCUF SCUF
TOOM
SCUF SCUF SCUF
TOOM
TOOM

TOOM
TOOM
TOOM
TOO
KA-TUNG
KA-TUNG
KA-TUNG
KA-TUNG
SPLASH
SPLASH
DRIP
DRIP
DRIP
TOOM
TOOM
TOOM
TOOM
SCUF
SCUF
SCUF
SCUF
SCUF
SCUF
SCUF
SCUF
SCUF
SCUF
SCUF

THUD
TOOM
TOOM
TOOM
TOOM
TOOM
TOOM
TOOM

GOOD MORNING

HOW SO, DEAR?

AARDVARK COMMENT

P.O. BOX 1674, STATION 'C', KITCHENER, ONTARIO N2G 4R2

Dear Aardvark Comment,

In light of the fact that Dave Sim is no longer responding to his letters it is pointless to ask him questions or even, for that matter, to address letters to him. I would like, then, to take this opportunity to, with the grace of the publisher, direct this discourse at the readers of *Cerebus* and, specifically, to those who are inclined to write letters to "Aardvark Comment".

Ladies and gentlemen, please, snap out of it. Stop embarrassing yourselves. Every month (or so) two or three pages of the finest graphic literature we will ever come across in our lifetimes is devoted to printing prose from its readers and we have nothing to say. It's truly sad to see so many letters appear in print from so many people who seem to think that purchasing *Cerebus* entitles them to a lifetime membership in the I-Am-Dave-Sim's-Buddy club or something. I am so very tired of seeing letters like these:

Dear Dave,

Have you ever been so stoned that you wake up the next morning to find the salt and pepper shakers in the freezer?

or

Dear Dave,

I've been deceiving myself for some time now that I've been in love with this mediocre-looking freshmen girl at school who, when I stopped spending sizeable amounts of money on her and started acting semi-neurotic about sex, dumped me like week-old potato salad and I now feel the need to vindicate my loss and deny my insecurity by unfairly slandering her in a respectable periodical and, thus, make myself seem immature and unintelligent.

or

Dear Dave,

Cerebus is way cool, dude! He is truly the stankiest character in comics! Really! Wow! If you ever need your butt smooched, licked or polished, you know who to call!

or

Dear Dave,

I've just pulled the back of my jockey shorts up over my head and hooked them on my nose in order to help me concentrate and write this letter.

Do these look familiar? Although letters like these are minimally amusing, they betray the potential of "Aardvark Comment". Especially since they are so abundant of late. The last decent letter in a long while was the one from Elena Steir after the conclusion of *Church and State*. Since then there have been only a handful of worthy efforts, amongst them the guy with the Fred Gwinne problem who, whilst being wildly silly, at least did it well and the occasional letter from the enigmatic and eloquent personality who calls herself Cassandra. I have to believe that among twenty-five thousand readers there are more than a half-dozen or so who are willing and competent enough to contribute to the letter pages.

How about this, then (and it's just a suggestion, albeit disguised as a plea): When we write in, we take a few sentences to praise Mr. Sim for the quality of his endeavour and thank him for his dedication to a medium that is in dire need of such dedication. We can mention, briefly, what a true inspiration his work is and point out that Gerhard is easily the best pen and ink artist in comics today. Then, if we leave out the majority of our personal problems, we'll have all kinds of space left over to discuss the myriad of themes, symbols, and images that make *Jaka's Story* one of the most brilliant things ever to grace newsprint. Well, we could even get silly once in a while.

Besides, if Dave won't talk to us, we might as well talk to each other. How about it?

David Chenette
33 Randlett St.
Quincy, MA
USA 02170

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

The Lake Poets would be proud of you; (Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Southey) if they were still around.

Your pen and ink editions are masterful.

- Detur aliquando otium quiesque fessis, - let ease and rest be sometimes granted to the weary: Seneca
- And may the wind always be at your back.

I work the night shifts at Tower Books.

Sincerely,

Thomas Nolan
3602 No. Monroe
Tacoma, WA
USA 98407

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave 'the Man' Simmo and Friends,

We here at Acme Inc. wish to market your idea for fucking someone 'til their eyes change colour. This would be considerably cheaper and easier than making tinted contact lenses. Your techniques may revolutionize the whole eye color-changing business.

We would like to sign you up with our Research and Development Dept. under our lead technician, Miss Philadelphia Latio. We offer a handsome salary and numerous fringe benefits.

Acme Inc., where innovators are exploited!!

Yours in membership of the British Commonwealth,

Bradford Welch
4 Maureen St.
Queensland
Australia
4119

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

You know, there's a funny thing about that name "Dave". See, everyone I've ever met named "Dave" was either somebody's sidekick (as in Captain Crunch and . . .), some cool person's dorky friend, or someone you just kick around. Now, I'm not saying you fit any of the preceeding descriptions, Dave, but I just thought you should be aware of how others see you. (I can just hear them at the conventions, a group whispering at the corner table, "Psst–look. There's that cool artist-guy Gerhard and his dorky friend *Dave*.") Oh well, maybe you could just start calling yourself "David". I mean, that's a classy name — nothing like "Dave" at all. Or perhaps you've got a middle name . . .

Well, on to my reason for writing (not that I need one, but . . .) I guess this whole masturbation thing has interested

me; something about seeing big words in print excites me. Scientifically, I suppose, sex is a need requiring satisfaction (not unlike self-esteem and approval, and to a lesser degree, food, exercise, and defecation). However, mistaking the sweaty palms of sexual anticipation for "true love" leads to dissatisfaction, for it's only momentary infatuation. At this level, whether you're fucking yourself or someone else the excitement is derived from "Hollywood" fantasy images. No one can avoid being susceptible to this socialization; it may as well be accepted. I would agree also that, recognizing the danger of AIDS, "wanking" is a fine substitue for "quenching the flames of passion." Unfortunately, for those less-imaginative people, masturbation remains a dull substitute.

Aside from this simple infatuation, there is another idea commonly connected with sex. Andrew Knapp stated, "It's impossible to desire what you already have," but, I reply that it is also impossible to love what you don't have. Andrew speaks of masturbation as the "ideal sexual union," forgetting that a union implies two parts. (Have you ever seen half an arch standing up on its own?) Bernie Mojzes preferred the euphemism "intercourse" for sex; intercourse, a word once synonymous with communication, is not a give and take deal (you do me, I'll do you), but a *sharing*. How two-dimensional it would be to only fuck ourselves! As a stupid analogy: What if I exercised on cycling machines alone at home, while watching *Roseanne* — instead of running with a group of friends along the river, enjoying the elusive scents of annis and morning dew? Sorry, I prefer a little honey with my toast.

Lastly, to that goofball Lee F. Shedden, what the hell is this about NGACP?!?! Listen pal; sounds awful fishy to me. See, I've heard of the NGACP before — but not the one you describe; oh no, no, no. National Generation of Aardvark Comment Persona indeed! I'm wise to your hideous scheme of WORLD DOMINATION! Beware goodfolk: Lee F. Shedden, as Grandlord of the New Generation of American/Canadian Platypuses, plans to overthrow the human race! Legions of North American platypuses (and other stupid animals) are amassing, training, planning, waiting . . . to strike! Don't print his letters, Dave! Can't you see he's just trying to use your letter column as an underground information network?!?! We've got to stop them now; I'm begging for help! Sharon Malloy, aren't there earth-pigs out there willing to fight for freedom? Cerebus, can't you . . .? Geez, I'm getting desperate here — Fred Quinne: the Italian Woodchuck . . . The Living Five-Pound Block of Cheese . .? Help! Lee F. Shedden, hmmph! What's the "F" stand for — "Fucks sheep"?

Yours,

Fred Robinson
8448 La Riviera Drive
Sacramento, CA
USA 95826

P.S. That's not really my address, but feel free to send anything you want to the guv.

P.P.S. By the way, *Dave*, Cerebus continues to entertain and impress me, even on re-readings. However, I won't go into detail because I'm not interested in writing an essay. Loved seeing the "bad girl" side of Jaka shine through at the close of 127; I'll bet Pud withered when he saw that.

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave:

Please, please, please print this letter: "D". Thank you!

Michael Logusz
Dearborn Hgts, Michigan
USA

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave 'n' Ger:

WHAT!!! It's January ALREADY??? Where does time go? You asked me to write you back about something . . don't think of this as late . . . think of it as having made it! I'm really sorry.

Am *MUCH* impressed with that "Cerebus on the Berlin Wall" fold-out in #127 . . . Way to go, Earth Pig!!!

I'm glad you enjoyed my letter about the Chinese sign of the Earth Pig . . . Thanks for printing it . . . I could hear the squeals of delight from Earth Pig born Varkies for days! Chinese astrology is no longer as obscure as it once was, so I knew I'd better make my move before someone else did.

1956 . . . the Year of the Fire Monkey. Fire is warm and brilliant . . . but also destructive. People born in years ruled by Fire make decisive, outspoken leaders. They are, on the whole, aggressive, adventurous doers. They are impatient when they don't get their own way and inclined to use force . . . but paradoxically, the more force they apply . . . the more they encounter in return. 1776, the year of America's birth, was a Fire Monkey year . . . her phenomenal growth and achievements in so short a span of time (as well as the brashness so often associated with the Yanks) are not at all unusual among the people of this sign. 1867, the Year of Confederation, was a Fire Cat year . . . cats are probably the most laid-back, discreet, and prudent if not prudish characters in the Chinese zodiac.

Monkey years (the next will be 1992, and a very good year it should be for you, Dave . . . for all but the Horse, and possibly the Tiger, one's own year is extra good) are, like the Monkey, anything but boring. "Strike while the iron is hot" and "Who hesitates is lost" are the words to live by in the Year of Monkey. Expect ANYTHING . . . especially the unexpected. It's a good year to launch new ideas . . . but be extra wary that someone isn't trying to trick you!

Revolutions and riots have often taken place in the Year of the Monkey . . . like the students' revolt in Paris in the spring of 1968. I find it especially interesting to note that the only disqualification in all the 115 runnings of the Kentucky Derby happened in a Monkey year. In 1968 Dancer's Image tested positive for steroids . . . the painkiller phenlbutazone to be axact! And in your natal year, at the Grand National steeplechase in Britain, the favourite, the leader and seemingly inevitable winner, Devon Loch, jumped into the air for no apparent reason at all mere yards from the finish line, and by so doing, lost the race. Strange happenings . . . but let's view them in the context of real monkey behaviour.

Of all the animals in the cycle, it is the monkey which most resembles a human being. They are the most intelligent after us (unless you count the dolphin, but since there IS no Year of the Dolphin, let's just stick to saying that monkey intelligence is second only to humans!). Monkeys are nimble, agile, inquisitive, and mischievious . WHEREVER you find them.

But if the Monkey reflects our intelligence, this sign also reflects our human capacity for deceit. The dexterity and agility of Monkey have their good AND bad aspects. Monkey people are original, clever, adroit; quick learners as well as good actors . . . and effervescent companions. They are also often manipulative and unscrupulous . . . except for present company.

Monkeys believe they are superior to anyone else. You don't believe insults hurled at you . . . you find them funny more than hurtful, and that whoever is baiting you must be merely jealous. Your supreme confidence makes you oblivious to anyone who is not involved in whatever you are doing at a given moment. You have an uncanny knack of getting people to like you (even after you have had your bit of fun at their expense . . . (but strangely enough you do not care much what anyone thinks of you). You can solve a problem with lightning speed . . . but once decided on a course of action you must start on it right away before you lose interest. Though you often get what you want,

you are not one to treasure your victories. You are always seeking something new.

Being on the manipulative side yourself, you are always expecting others to have some kind of ulterior motive; you tend to be suspicious. You trust few people and form few lasting friendships.

There is a bit of the rebel in you; you delight in taunting those who take themselves too seriously and who try to order you around. Your worst enemy in the zodiac is the Tiger (as your opposite, a Tiger person would be 6 or 18 years older or younger than you are. They do take themselves seriously . . . and try to order EVERYBODY around!).

A good number of you become famous . . . but one thing threatens your success . . . even with your charm, you can make people weary of you by talking too much.

And now Gerhard, we come to the sign that started all this - The drumrolldrumroll drumroll . . . EARTH PIG - hey, that's US!

People born in Earth years tend to be practical. We prefer to go with deductive reasoning and occupations with a greater than average measure of financial security . . . except for those of us who become artists! We move slowly toward lasting results and have sound reasons for everything we do. We tend toward the conservative, rarely exaggerate, and can discipline ourselves. The bad side: we can be overprotective of our own interests to the point of being unadventurous. (You sound like a great complement to someone like Dave!)

The Pig is the only animal in the Chinese zodiac with one use and one use only . . . to be eaten. We are generous, lenient, obliging, honest, giving, and scrupulous to a fault. Our year (the next will be 1995) is a year of peace and goodwill. We tend to be good to ourselves too . . . we often indulge in hedonistic excesses . . . food, drink, sleep, etc . . . We very rarely lie or steal . . . but when we do, we are uncomfortable with the ill-gotten gain and figure we may as well hang for sheep as lamb. This tendency toward fatalism often leads us to go back and indulge all the more in the very behaviour that made us feel so guilty in the first place. That's the pig's "rolling in mud" trait.

In case Dave's been looking down his nose at you the past couple of pages, I'd like to mention that Pigs (both human and barnyard) are no slouches either in the brains department. We love to read and enjoy stimulating intellectual conversation . . . as long as it doesn't boil over into an arguement. We desire peace above all and will do almost anything to steer clear of a confrontation or fight. People who don't know better may call us wimps . . . but make no mistake, we have plenty of quiet inner strength, which we keep in reserve for whenever we need it. When pushed to the limit, we prove serious foes indeed. We are just pacifists at heart.

We often prefer to pretend to agree with someone who says something we consider preposterous, rather than quarrel about it; anyone we condescend to argue with may feel honoured indeed!

We tend to be all or nothing at all in some areas We take forever to decide on a course of action . . . yet once decided nothing is going to stop us. We have few friends . . . but those we do have we keep all our lives. We talk little, but when we do decide to speak it's like opening floodgates . . . we can often ramble on and on for 4 pages or more!

The one thing a Pig should never do is go to court . . . especially in the Year of the Cat (1999). Being impulsive as well as honest, we'd come off looking second best, given the unfortunate reality that a court of law resembles a theatre more than it does a scientific laboratory.

Yes, we're honest . . . so much that it doesn't always occur to us that others may not necessarily be as honest as we are. The Pig is omnivorous - it'll swallow anything . . . so we tend to be gullible . . . which could be why I've been studying all this stuff! You and Dave decide how much of these pages apply to you.

The Year of the Horse begins this Friday . . . I would like to wish you both a Very Happy Chinese New Year. The Year of the Snake, which will no doubt be over by the time you read this, is hectic for us Pigs The Pig's opposite and worst enemy in the zodiac is the Snake I hope you didn't overspend last year, Ger; did you receive any sad news in the last 12 months? I did . . . I was planning a trip to Kentucky to visit the 1973 Triple Crown Winner Secretariat . . . and he was humanely destroyed October 4th because of an incurable (make that incurable) hoof inflammation. (What turns us off about Snakes, 6 and 18 years older and younger than us, is that they are sophisticated and elegant, which strikes us as pretentious . . they in turn find us honest, down-to-earth souls boorish . . . Well EXCUUUUUUUUUUUUUUSE *US*!) For the Monkey, the Year of the Snake is one of mixed success. Disputes at home, it says here in *The Handbook of Chinese Horoscopes*; you would have been well advised to "hold your tongue and avoid confrontation at all costs" . . . but it also says you can count on "assistance from your friends and support from your (. . . brace yourself . .) SUPERIORS! Do you think there are any out there?

The Year of the Snake is never quiet . . . it often sees rapid, irreversible change (WHAT?NEVER!!) The stock market crash of '29 was in a Snake Year, as were the '65 race riots in the States. The (FIRST!) Russian Revolution was in a Snake Year (1917) as were the recent events that if anyone COULD have predicted even 2 years ago, they would have been placed on the nearest couch pronto. It's also a big year for sex scandals . . . we've seen two big ones . . . from Britain and Japan. The unusual one about the latter is that it accompanies a feminist awakening in that country . . . and it's about time, I say!

The Horse is lively, high-spirited, impulsive, erratic, independent, selfish, and a doer. This would be a good year to let off steam . . . do something impulsive you always dreamed of doing . . . and work hard. For the Monkey, worries and frustrations left over from last year still face you. Don't rock the boat, lower expectations if you have to. If you can't beat 'em, join 'em. To succeed this year, you would do well to be conservative and watchful.

And for us Pigs, this should be a good year if we can just keep from being too careless with money . . . speculation, lending to new "friends" . . . (and betting on the races??) Past problems are supposed to turn into blessings in disguise; something we've been seeking a long time comes to us this year. I wonder what it could be?? A good year for family and career.

That's about it, guys . . .

Happy Horse Year!!!

Sharon Malloy
47 Airport Heights Drive
St. John's, Newfoundland
A1A 4Z7

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave·

I am Rick, my wife Jaka.

While I'm supposedly working on my dratted dissertation on science fiction, Akemi's trying hard to support us and to take classes to improve her English (she's Japanese). She's gone at work (as a secretary for Nissan, dancing for male executives) and classes 10-12 hours a day, five days a week, and me? Although I don't have an Oscar to play around with, and though I do do the housework (wash clothes and dishes, vacuum, mop), and do prepare Akemi's breakfasts and lunches, I tend to spend most of the day ineffectually sleep-working on the couch or bed, trying and failing miserably, to write my dissertation. and often I expect my wife to want to make love when I do, even though I know she's so tired after a long day or week of work and when she doesn't, I

can't stop myself from saying "Are you sure you don't want to do something?" and "Oh, that's ok, we can another time," with heavy icicles handing from my speech balloons, tugging my words down to chill our bed; when she feels sorry for me and says, "We can tomorrow night," I get so happy — "Really?" — my speech balloons shake off their ice and wag their tails.

The guilt festering inside me while I read *Cerebus* and type this letter is not unlike that which afflicts a conscientious husband, adulterous for the first time. But I'm caught by you and your gray earth-pig and must write, for, until I so purge myself, I'll accomplish nothing today. I hope you feel strangely guilty at the effect you have on someone who springs into life just as you read these words; at the weird power that you — the creator of an authentic, involving, awesome work of art — wield over countless people. I am your creature.

I would tell the woman from the letters page of issue #128 what she probably already knows if she's continued to read *Cerebus*: that you, Dave, are the the writer, and NOT the narrator of your novel and would not be the narrator even if Oscar weren't. It seems to me that, in a sense, even the writers of autobiographies aren't identical to their "narrators," and the same (to different degrees) goes for histories, newspaper stories, poems, scientific articles, letters, etc., and especially for fictions. In a magical way, Oscar and all your narrators (who are always characters in the story whether or not physically present), are aspects of you while you write with their voices, but really you're Dave Sim at work, creating. Do you (dis)agree?

Of course, it's easy for me to say this after reading Oscar's letter on the first page of #127, wherein you reveal that, for now anyway, Oscar is your narrator for your Jaka's Story (and is the writer inside your novel of *his* Jaka's Story, with a "not-Oscar" narrator-character of his own). You may have given earlier clues that I missed, but what an inspired, wonderful, revelation this was — so perfect and unexpectedly expected. When I read Oscar's letter, in mid-epiphany I said, "Ahhh-that's why the narration's been written that way! It's been Oscar all along!"

A friend had just told me about *Cerebus* and that a new story was starting, so I had just begun reading your work with #'s, 112 and 113. And I must admit that, being thus unfamiliar with your strong ability to write in a variety of styles and voices from other fiction, movies, and comics, etc., parodying and improving on the originals with great pleasure, I disliked what I at times believed was unnecessarily overwrought narration (which I thought revealed that you were trying too hard to be writerly and arty), and rather than carefully reading your (Oscar's) words, I'd skim over them, now and then spotting flowerly, cloying redundancies and circumlocutions. So until #127 I would have written a letter similar in spirit to Yvanna Woods' (though not so snappish).

With #127, everything changed — now I will reread all that I previously skimmed, this time rolling Oscar's words (NONE of which are redundant anymore) around in my mouth, savoring every morsel, seeing you, Oscar, Jaka, Rick, Cerebus, Palnu, EVERYTHING, freshly, differently. Oscar's narration prior to #127 (retroactively) and after #127 deepens and develops his character so much! And now I wonder, how much of Oscar's story about Jaka is true (empirically? aesthetically? psychologically?); and true for whom? for Jaka? for Rick? for Oscar? Although we've been learning Jaka's story through two layers of fiction — Oscar's and yours (four layers? Jaka told Rick, Rick told Oscar, Oscar's writing it now, and you're behind it all?), it all seems true! I can't wait for Jaka's reaction; even if she thinks it's all Oscarshit, "her story" will still be "true". Perfect for your themes.

Reading #127 made me buy the softbound version of #'s 1-25 two days ago, which doesn't have the letter pages, so your early readers probably pointed this out ages ago, but — that's so FUNNY, having Elrod talk like Foghorn Leghorn!! Every time I see the solemn-visaged Elrod say, "boy, I say, boy — pay attention to me when I'm talking to you, boy" for example, I hear the buffoonish huge white rooster's voice and burst out laughing at the incongruity.

Finally, I hope that you'll continue issuing the bi-weeklies and won't stop suddenly and leave poor late-comers like myself dry! Everything you've done with Cerebus is great.

Thanks for the earth-pig —

Jeff Peters
1677 University Terrace #1223
Ann Arbor, Michigan
USA 48104

★★★★★★★★★★

Dear Dave,

I've never written to a comic before (and actually am not doing so now, since I am writing to you - anyway, I assume you know what I mean), but this is . . . well, important. I don't know why no one else has noticed this and maybe I'm wrong but here it goes anyway. Dave please, PLEASE, PLEASE, don't kill off Jaka!!! (I would have to wear black for a month and I don't own that many black clothes). As to why I think you are planning her ultimate demise, what else am I supposed to make of that comment in the Note From The President, issue #114? I mean, come on: "She is almost certainly on the top rung of the karmic ladder and won't be back for another lifetime.

Or rather she was."

I have an idea. Don't sneer, it's my first and I'm rather excited about it. Why don't you kill off Cerebus instead and follow Jaka around for the next 150 issues or so. I know you said that the comic ends with Cerebus on his deathbed, friendless and alone but hey, you are the deity-like creator, you can change your mind. No? I didn't think so.

While I'm here . . . Boy, do I feel stupid. "Talking to Tarim" It was so obvious. There I was, waiting impatiently for Cerebus to ascend to heaven and meet Tarim when he already had (met Tarim, that is.) I am, of course, referring to issue 91, "Talking to Tarim" How obvious! I can only console myself, for my blatant stupidity, by thinking that none of my friends noticed it either.

Now, my big question is why did Big Round Glowing White Strange Thing a/k/a Tarim lie to Cerebus? Not only about not being Tarim, which is a minor and even uninteresting lie, but about how a totally random person (notice how he cons Cerebus into becoming the 'redeemer') gets to heaven, learns from Tarim and returns to Earth as a big hero/redeemer. Now we know that this doesn't happen so therefore Cerebus is being lied to; unless, of course, the big white light is just confused. Ascensions end with the Observer on the moon, not Tarim in Heaven. And notice that the Observer says he was hoping for Weishaupt. No matter who makes the Final Ascension, they reach the moon, not Tarim.

My next question (yes, another one) is why is Cerebus being lied to? Well, it goes back to issue 100, where we meet Cirin, another aardvark. By the way, do we have to wait to issue 200 to find out who the third aardvark is? When Cirin tells Circe to ready forces to invade Iest, they have little hope of success. Yet, while Cerebus is away on the moon, they do succeed. Could it be that Tarim wanted Cerebus out of the way during the invasion of Iest? Why? Either Tarim wanted Cirin to win and knew that Cerebus, as Pope, could rally citizens to defeat her troops or you had written yourself into a deadlock (mainly, Cerebus dies whether he kills Astoria or not). By the way, what happened to Astoria?

I love how you turned Jaka's Tale into a story written by that obnoxious poet, Oscar. What's Jaka going to do to him when she finds out about it? Assuming, that is, that she lives that long. I also like that demon head, sort of nice foreshadowing technique, impending doom and all that.

Sincerely,

Judyth (Funky Shoes) Gibson
Medieval Space Cadet

COMING THIS HOT SUMMER

**She lost her cats to the coyotes,
her best friend to Jesus,
and her lover to the Grand Canyon.
What else could go wrong?**

*Pregnant?
I can't be pregnant!
Pregnant is what happens
to uninformed nice girls!!*

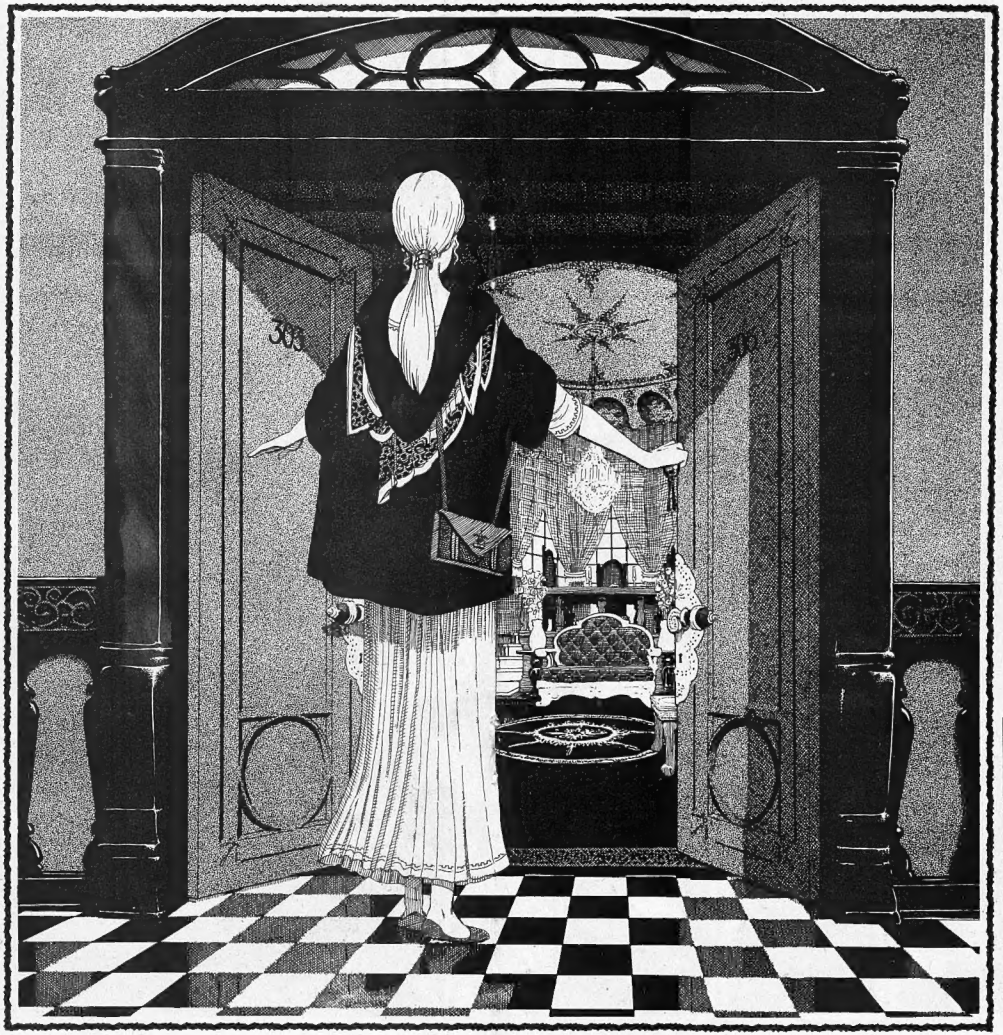
A GRAPHIC NOVEL

THE MAN CANYON

BY BOB BOZE BELL

IS IT HONKYTONK SUE'S TURN TO PAY THE FIDDLER?

'Those whom
the Gods
wish to destroy
They first
make mad.'
Euripedes



HER DAILY RITUALS continued and she gradually nurtured a careless disregard for both Astoria's Department and its curt communications. She lied when filling out her chart, copying the Department's Ideal Function column, verbatim, into the blank spaces in her own column in a small, precise hand; resenting the necessity of the deception only at the most cosmetic levels of her awareness; uncertain, even, if this mendacity represented defiance of her tormentors or a kind of surrender to them. It greatly diminished the frequency of pink onion skin intrusions into Jaka's life; an end effect which, to the child, more than justified whatever small dishonesty its causal means encompassed.

One morning, to her very great surprise, she discovered an envelope of *blue* onion skin which had been dropped through the mail slot in her front door. She turned it over in her hands several times, regarding it warily, very nearly certain that it represented some new and dreadful Department tactic; a demoralizing blow to her morale. Something hard and metallic lurked within those translucent confines, distending its parameters. When, at last, she tore the side of the envelope and its contents spilled into her open palm, the thing proved to be a small key, triangular in shape. It was wrapped in a single sheet of blue onion-skin stationery at the top of which was printed "Department of Don't-Tell-Astoria" in small black serif lettering. Hand-written in the middle of the page in purple ink was a notation which read "Suite 303-305."

Scarcely able to contain her excitement, Jaka threw one of her older jackets (she had worn it on four previous occasions) over her nightgown; paused only long enough to select a suitable Shen scarf from a field of four likely candidates; and then raced to the massive twin circular stair-cases which dominated the Main Foyer of the Tavers family quarters and represented the only means of access to the much-coveted third floor residences.

TAKING THE STEPS two and three at a time, it was a matter of a very few minutes before Jaka stood, breathlessly, regarding the three wide corridors which led away from the polished brass parapet. She hurried noiselessly along the first one past several doors until she noticed that the numbers (which had begun with 320) were getting larger instead of diminishing. She retraced her steps and tried the second hallway. Suite 308-310 was followed by 307-309 and she could feel her heart pounding with anticipation. She rounded the corner and made a small noise as she saw the set of double doors, the left marked 303 and the right, 305. She fumbled with the key, nearly dropping it in her haste. She twisted it right, then left, then right again. With a quiet metallic sound, the doors slid open, revealing an immense and stately living room the size of Jaka's entire current (soon-to-be previous) apartment.